

Memorandum



Date: January 25, 2004

To: Distribution

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager 

Subject: Animal Services Task Force-Revised Memorandum

During the last fiscal year, my office in coordination with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), undertook a comprehensive review of the Miami-Dade Animal Services Unit operation and related facility issues. Our findings led to a joint recommendation from my office and the OIG to hire an outside agency; the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). The HSUS performed an in-depth study, and provided detailed recommendations for improving this important public service. In addition to the HSUS review of the unit, an internal review was also conducted by the Office of Strategic Business Management. Both of these studies yielded recommendations which were ultimately adopted by the Board of County Commissioners as part of the 2004-05 budget. The initial plan was to first hire a Director for the newly created department and then commence with implementation of the HSUS' recommendations. The County immediately began the process of recruiting a Director for the Animal Services Department. Applications were received and the Selection Panel convened to review the applications meeting the minimum qualifications. Unfortunately, there were a small number of qualified candidates and the Selection Panel unanimously recommended that a larger pool of potential candidates would be in the best interest of the County. The Employee Relations Department (ERD) and the Selection Panel identified additional opportunities for increasing the applicant pool by broadening the outreach and advertisement medium to be utilized in our recruitment efforts.

It is my intent that in the interim we begin to implement some of the recommendations contained in the HSUS report. The HSUS report is very comprehensive and contains numerous long-term and short-term recommendations, some of which are essential to the well-being of the animals and should be implemented without further delay. It is in the spirit of public service and commitment to the welfare of the animals that I am creating the Animal Services Task Force, as recommended by the HSUS, to implement the critical recommendations. Assistant County Manager, Alex Muñoz, will serve as the Chair of the Task Force. I am also appointing the other individuals listed below to serve on the Task Force due to their experience and dedication to this important effort.

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP:

Alex Muñoz, Assistant County Manager (Chair)

J.D. Patterson, Jr., Assistant Director, Miami-Dade Police Department

Carlos M. Vazquez, Police Captain, Miami-Dade Police Department

Kevin Lynskey, Office of Performance Improvement

Donna Weaver, Friend Forever Rescue

Jeanette Christos, Tri-County Humane Society

Dr. Peter Fernandez, AARDVARK Animal Clinic (representing the South Florida Veterinary Foundation and the South Florida Veterinary Association)

As recommended in the HSUS report, the Task Force will be charged with review of the recommendations contained in the report and developing a working plan to implement priorities and action items with due dates. I will also designate a working group of professionals from the County and outside the County to serve as staff support to the Task Force to assist with implementation of the recommendations. The Task Force will reach out to other local experts, interested parties and advocates, as appropriate.

I look forward to your input and participation in this important process that will bring Miami-Dade County and its Animal Services Department to a new level of service delivery and excellence. I also want to thank the OIG for their support during this process of improving the shelter and its operations and the Miami Dade County Police Department staff that continues to manage the operations until the new director is on board.

c: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez
Honorable Chair Joe A. Martinez and Members,
Board of County Commissioners
Christopher Mazzella, Inspector General
Robert L. Parker, Director, MDPD
Alex Munoz, Assistant County Manager